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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

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LINCOLN DAY 1936.

(Address by Benjamin Wallace Douglass,  
Ben Douglass of Brown County).

Informal introduction.

We are gathered together tonight in celebration of the birthday of -- a horse and buggy President.

The occasion is one of solemnity. An occasion that calls for oratory and for eloquence that I cannot furnish.

But it is also an occasion that calls for the consideration of public questions in the same straightforward, honest way that they would have been considered by the first Republican president.

However, I do not want to appear before you as speaking for Lincoln or even attempting to speak as I think he might on this occasion. I can speak only for myself. I am no impersonator and if I were I would not attempt to compete with that great artist along those lines who now occupies the White House.

On this occasion too, it is well for us to remember that this country has faced grave problems in the past and that those problems were solved not by amateurish experiment but by honest thinking and by applying to the problems of the present the wisdom of the past.

And, while this is a solemn occasion let us not forget that a great writer once said that, "The Angel of Humor is sent us that she may teach us to laugh at the wicked and foolish, whom, without her aid, we might have the weakness to hate." For myself, I desire to make it perfectly plain that I have no quarrel with any individual. But I have very much of a quarrel with the principles some persons represent.

We are standing today, as we have not stood for nearly a thousand years, at the cross roads of human liberty. Either we are to continue along the broad highway we have successfully followed for so long, or we are to take the crooked trail of communism that can lead only to national disaster and to human serfdom.

It is a trying time, and many persons are, I believe, honestly confused with the picture of government they see before them. They have difficulty in determining whether it is a picture painted on the sound canvas of good government or on the rotten burlap of communism.



Abraham Lincoln had that rare power of grasping the most complex problem and presenting it in such plain and honest words that it became clear even to the most obtuse listener. He did not deal in the graceful verbiage of New Deal spokesmen -- he said what he meant and he meant what he said.

In attacking this false philosophy of government which we designate as the New Deal, we would be well advised to copy our methods of attack from our first Republican president.

Lincoln was a clean fighter. He did not hesitate to employ humor and ridicule when those were the weapons best suited to his use but his main strength lay in his ability to drive home sound reasoning with the sledge hammer of facts. He had so high a regard for the truth that, tho he was lied about, he did not deal in lies.

I wish that it were possible, on this occasion, to refrain from criticism of the New Deal, or of anything else; for Lincoln was a man of peace. So much a man of peace that I like to think of him as second only to that Prince of Peace who came out of Nazareth some two thousand years ago.

But, while Lincoln was a man of peace he did not shrink from war when war was forced upon him. And here, today, we will not retreat in the age old battle for human liberty which he so well advanced. It is for us, the living, to carry on and I feel deep in my heart that he would not have it otherwise.

Had Thomas Lincoln lived under this present administration -- do you know what would have happened to him? I know, because I have seen the way that this administration works with that kind of people. Thomas Lincoln, on his little Kentucky farm was "under-privileged." The New Deal would have sent a "case worker" down to snoop around and then Old Tom would have been "rehabilitated." They would have taken him off that Kentucky farm and moved him to some place they liked better. (Alaska, perhaps). It would not have made any difference what Tom Lincoln thought about it -- it would have been a case of the New Deal Poppa knowing best. After he got to his new farm he would have discovered that he had thirty or so years to pay off the mortgage that the administration had saddled on his back. He may have been perfectly happy with that old Kentucky home and it may



have been free of debt -- but that only proved how far behind the times Tom Lincoln was. Had he been modern and in step with progress he would have provided a nice mortgage on his farm without waiting for the administration to do it for him.

That is the modern note today -- spend your way back to prosperity. That is, unless you happen to be a veteran who is just about to get a long delayed bonus. If you get the bonus you are supposed to salt it away. It could not be otherwise in this utterly contradictory, Alice In Wonderland administration.

But suppose we take another look at Thomas Lincoln's family and see what is happening to his little boy Abe.

Well, it is just too bad, the case worker got Abe too, dressed him in a cute little pink Russian smock, sent him to a community dancing school and taught him that the music, like the brains of the New Dealers, goes round and round.

Perhaps I'm a bit pessimistic. Perhaps all of this New Deal regimentation is what we need. Maybe I'm just old fashioned but, somehow, I can't see any Abraham Lincolns growing up in any socialistic incubators.

It took the raw, bare contact with mother earth herself to make a Lincoln. It took the hard work, the unending perseverance, the constant toil from daylight to dark to develop in this man the fibres of honesty, of integrity, of uncompromising devotion to an ideal that carried him and his country through the greatest crisis they had ever known.

Do you think any modern "panty-waste" could have withstood the shock of Bull-Run; could have coped with the men in his own administration who would have wrecked the country for their own ends; could have withstood the storm of bitter criticism that roared about his ears?

During all those long years of frightful conflict between the states, Lincoln stood steadfast; his one purpose to save a nation from destruction. There was never a moment's doubt as to his destination. He did not experiment with many doubtful expedients in the hope that perhaps one of them would work. He was not like some poor, faltering sick man, blundering into a drug store and taking a swig



of all the medicines on the theory, that, soon or late he would find a specific.

No, Lincoln's course was a steadfast course. Lincoln's word was an honest word -- when he said he was going East, he WENT East -- not to California. And, when he placed his hand upon the Bible and swore to defend the Constitution, he did not make a theatrical show of it -- he defended the Constitution.

Living in a time of stress and worry and bloodshed, Lincoln never asserted that "the machinery of civilization had come to a dead stop." Under a man like Lincoln the machinery of civilization could not stop for it is men like him that constitute the very machinery of civilization itself.

The machinery of civilization in America will stop only when government of the people, by the people and for the people, has perished from the earth.

And there are too many Americans, Democrats and Republicans alike, ever to permit that such a thing might happen.

This year we are faced with a campaign that is more than a mere election. It is one of the turning points in the great battle for human liberty that has gone on for a thousand years and I beseech you people to wake up!

I want you to realize that human liberty is at stake as it never was since the signing of Magna Carta.

I care not whether you are Republicans or Democrats, there have been times when I scarcely knew whether I was one or the other, but there was never a time when I was not an American.

I appeal to you, not as partisans of any party, but as Americans, to stand by those principles of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality to which Abraham Lincoln subscribed.

And, in case you think me over-anxious about the threatened loss of our liberties, let me show you by a few concrete examples how this present administration functions in its ruthless effort to subdue all opposition no matter from what source it may come.

You know, without being told, that I am a Brown County farmer. My ways are the ways of quietness and peace. I live in Brown County from choice, not because I have to. If money means anything to you,



I have been offered upward of \$10,000 a year to live elsewhere. I have placed happiness, contentment and peace above price.

I am still a Brown County farmer -- living on what the New Deal calls sub-marginal land.

I ask you now, to go back a few years in your memory -- as far as you can -- through as many administrations as you have known. Apply what you know of the attitude of those administrations to what I am about to tell you.

Early in January, I had the good, (or bad), fortune to publish in The Saturday Evening Post two articles that were sharply critical of the New Deal. The first reaction from those articles was a flood of mail from every corner of this country. There were letters from statesmen, from men on relief, from so-called captains of industry and from captains in C.C.C. camps, from army officers and from ministers of the gospel.

These letters proved, beyond a reasonable doubt, that every statement of fact I had made was true, not only in Brown County but in hundreds of communities scattered from one end of this land to the other.

Witness, now, the way that those articles got under the hide of the New Deal.

The ink was scarcely dry on the pages of the Post before an agent of the New Deal was combing the hills in a frantic effort to prove that I had not told the truth.

Can you imagine any previous administration sending an investigator out here from Washington to brow-beat my witnesses in order to save their failing case.

Apparently they have now centered their attack upon one item in those articles -- an item that had to do with a gymnasium in Helmsburg.

In my article I stated that a works director had told me that the building had cost around \$30,000 up to last June. I also stated that the work had lagged and that after some twenty months the building was still unfinished.

The New Deal charges that this is gross misrepresentation.

So far as the works director is concerned, perhaps it is. As a matter of fact I am not right sure he is a works director. He may have



some other title. All I know is that he seemed to have access to the figures and I took his word for the sum he quoted.

An article in the Franklin Star informs the public that this particular gymnasium was completed on August 3, 1935. If any of you are interested I invite you to drive over to Helmsburg. If the day is not too hot; or too cold; or too wet; you will still find men at work. There is no need for you to hurry with your trip because, at the present rate of progress, those men will be working there for many months.

The New Deal claims this building cost only around \$13,000. Of course, I cannot prove what it cost. I am of the opinion that no one else can. It is one of those projects that got lost in the alphabet and it hasn't found its way out yet.

However, I do know that the township spent \$8,000 for materials for that building. I'm inclined to think that the labor to assemble those materials cost more than any five or six thousand dollars. This labor has been of the most expensive kind.

For instance, one day last winter, an observer was watching a group of men working on that job. One of them whom I will identify only as "John" because that is not his name, was seen to stand a brick on end in front of the bonfire.

When this brick had reached the proper degree of pleasant warmth, John carried it over to a sheltered spot against the foundation, placed it carefully where he wanted it, and sat upon it. From what I know of Lincoln, I'm quite sure that if he had been directing that crew, John would have received an even greater amount of warmth, in the same place but by a different method.

However, far be it from me to deny these Johns their share of the more abundant life. I will be dead before the bill comes due, but you young folks in this audience, you won't be dead and you and your children and your children's children will pay for John's hot brick.

You can't tell me that five or six thousand dollars worth of that kind of labor could assemble \$8,000 worth of raw building material into a gymnasium. I've done too much building myself to swallow any yarn like that.



But, if you are opposed to the New Deal and have that sort of abdominal fortitude that prompts you to get up and say so, you may expect to be lied about and you may as well get used to the racket of the New Deal agents as it will be raised against you.

This is neither the time nor the place for me to hunt down, kill, stuff and label any of my own personal liars. Besides this is not the open season for that particular sort of fur bearing varmint.

I'd much rather turn my attention upon the liars in the opposition camp who may be classed as big game.

During the past three years, yes, during the past seven years, truth has been crushed to earth with a vengeance.

Away back in 1928, one Charley Michaelson, the smartest publicity man who ever lived, was employed by the Democratic party to "smear Hoover."

Now, I don't know what you think about Herbert Hoover but to me the fate of Herbert Hoover represents a major tragedy in the history of the human race. When the tale is told, Herbert Hoover will emerge as one of the great statesmen, one of the great humanitarians, one of the great executives of all times. We now need Herbert Hoover more than we ever needed one man since the day of Lincoln -- and we can't have him because a certain villanous little Charley Michaelson did his smearing work so well.

If the Democratic party never had to answer for any other crime, the mere employment of Charley Michaelson to smear Hoover, is enough to send it to its grave unwept, unhonored and unsung.

That spirit of dishonesty has permeated the whole fabric of the New Deal -- it has been proved false, all the way from its very name right up to the Supreme Court.

In the first place it is not a "deal" at all, it's a political tap dance -- with at least a few features borrowed from St. Vitis. The New Deal will borrow anything.

In the second place it is not "new" because at least some of its features were first proposed by one Hammurabi, a Babylonian King, who lived five hundred years before Moses. Hammurabi had a little N.R.A. of his own, codes and all, and it failed to work in spite of the fact that old Ham was not hampered by any Supreme Court.



The New Deal, in many of its parts, has been tried in a dozen ages and it has always failed because it ignored those immortal truths that have guided mankind through the ages.

Henry Wallace has said that "the success of the New Deal is predicated upon a change in the hearts of men." That statement, I admit, proves that Wallace is an idealist of a high order. I admire idealism and I take a justifiable pride in the fact that I am not without a trace of it myself. However, I have lived long enough to realize the folly of reaching for the moon, which I cannot get, instead of grasping a very perfect apple that is within my reach.

There is room for improvement in human life and in human relations -- we all know that. Some of us, at least, are smart enough to know that you can't legislate honesty into men any more than you can legislate into them an appreciation of poetry or art. That sort of thing is a matter of growth and education.

And, under our American system of government, under our horse and buggy Constitution, humanity has made more real progress in the last fifty years than it had made in the previous five hundred -- most of it under Republican administrations.

Now, under the New Deal, the race faces the same situation that a boy of ten would face if he were told that he had to grow to adult manhood over night. Physiologically he couldn't do it -- but imagine his bewilderment if he could.

But the New Deal takes no lesson from physiology or history. It did not know the antiquity of the Hammurabi code. It does not know that communism is far from new.

Comrade Tugwell doubtless thinks that communism is a form of government originated in Russia. At least he has been emulating Russian methods. He did not need to go to Russia to learn about communism because it existed on this continent a thousand years ago -- and, it worked.

That is to say, it served to keep body and soul together in a rather large group of native Americans who lived down in the south of Mexico and were known as the Mayas. These people practiced communism



for a long time. Under it there developed the highest culture ever known on this continent prior to the arrival of the white man. It was a culture that produced great buildings and lovely metal and stone jewelry. It developed a religion of its own and it had a remarkable knowledge of that difficult science astronomy.

So far, so good. Let us see what else it developed. Well, for one thing, it developed, in spite of its communal control of property, a ruling priesthood that appropriated to itself the written word. The workers, the ones that are supposed to profit from communism, were reduced to a state of serfdom not even rivaled in the dark days of the Middle Ages.

So long as men are men, and not gods, there will always be the necessity for a portion of the population to show the way. There will always be need for leaders. And so it was in ancient Mexico. The self appointed priests controlling the written word, became the ruling class and ground down their illiterate subjects under as cruel a heel as was ever recorded in ancient history. And that is exactly where we are heading under the New Deal.

It is time that this New Deal Itch to which we have been subjected be given a dose of the old fashioned sulphur of common honesty and horse sense.

Take for instance the triple A. It pretended to be designed to aid the farmer. Instead it tried to teach the false economy of scarcity and it was in fact only a wooden horse by which the New Deal Creeks hoped to subdue the Troy of American agriculture. Had it not been cast into the outer darkness by the Supreme Court it would eventually have regimented ever farm and every farmer from one end of the land to the other and the foundation of another American communism would have been laid -- with its inevitable end in serfdom.

The president has recently said that the government has been returned to Washington. Is that government of the people, by the people and for the people? It was always my weak impression that the government of the United States was invested in the people of the United States and not in a hand picked autocracy at Washington.



In 1933 the president told us that he was going to try a lot of experiments and if any of them failed he could be the first to discard them and try again. The Supreme Court beat him to it.

In three years he has circumnavigated the economic globe and never sighted land once. It is time to bring this public sailor to a permanent anchorage. In the future let him satisfy his love for sea life on Vincent Astor's yacht. Astor, being one of those reviled money changers, can pay for it. You and I cannot.

There will be those who will say that my criticism here tonight is destructive criticism. That is exactly what I intend that it should be.

The most constructive thing we can do today is to utterly destroy the false philosophy of government that has been set up in this free land. The mere act of destruction will do more to restore confidence and to bring back normal national life than have any or all of the acts of the New Deal.

But, if they insist upon some constructive criticism in addition we might seriously consider a program for American agriculture that was originated by Wheeler McMillen and published last December, in Country Home, the magazine he edits.

You will find this program in the recent speeches of Frank Knox and of Herbert Hoover. You will find mutilated fragments of it in the floundering plans of the present administration. I take some pride in the fact that this program was first openly discussed, last October, on my Brown County hill-top.

Also, proper steps should be taken to protect the products of labor and of agriculture against the competition of cheap labor abroad. There is no point in plowing under corn and cotton and killing pigs and then buying those products in Poland, Argentina and Brazil -- and that is exactly what this present administration has done. While I have no quarrel with Canada, for I have some good friends up there, I see no point in buying Canadian granite while our Indiana quarry men twiddle their thumbs.



Communitistic forestry should not be forced upon a free people. It does not fit into the American picture and only evil can come of it.

Unlike the omnipotent members of the New Deal, I'm not attempting to cure all of the ills of the world at once. Probably many of our present problems will be revealed as men of straw and will fall apart with the return of confidence which will follow the overthrow of this Washington Frankenstein.

In Indiana affairs too, our main trouble is that our ancestral Gods of truth and probity have been abandoned.

It is irritating to hear the chief executive take credit for the fact that the state has no bonded indebtedness -- when the Constitution expressly forbids the state to issue bonds.

Then too, the present liquor set-up merely makes a bad business worse. It appears that liquor, like the poor, we will have always with us. It will always be a problem. It should be a local problem rather than a state racket.

Some of the major problems of the next administration in Indiana will be conservation problems. This branch of the state government should be taken out of the hands of amateurs, no matter how enthusiastic, and placed under the management of men who have more than a sentimental interest in the question.

And, finally, in Indiana, the governor should be stripped of all powers not specifically delegated to him by the Constitution. After all, this is a commonwealth -- not a kingdom.

Back in 1861, when the country faced a condition no graver than the one it faces now, Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Just now the supreme public duty of all thinking men is to assert freedom. Go where it is threatened, and say, 'I am for it, and do not wish to live in the world a moment longer than it exists!'"

What was true then is true now. Go where liberty is threatened and say that YOU are for it. It may be later than you think!

The Republican Party must lead this fight for liberty in 1938 just as it has led the fight before. It goes without saying that the leaders of that party must be wise enough to avoid all party friction. If that



involves the sacrifice of some sacred heads in order to unify the party and to attract new strength to it, then let those heads be sacrificed. Above all, the party must carefully avoid petty jealousy that may arise in this primary. No candidate dares place his own interest above that of the party -- for this year personal ambition must be forgotten and every man must do his utmost for the good of all.

And, further than that, the Republican organization, no matter how perfect it may become; no matter how free from internal strife it may be; must not depend alone upon its organized members to win the election. You must go outside your organization and enlist the help of every honest man and woman in every city and town, every village and rural community. No one is too humble, no one too obscure, to do his part -- and that part must be done.

This Nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, must not perish from the earth.











